

Health Advisory: Diarrheal Illnesses Outbreak Associated with Farm Visits

Minnesota Department of Health May 26, 2016 11:00 CDT

Action Steps:

Local and tribal health departments: Please forward to clinics and hospitals in your jurisdiction.

Hospital and clinics: Please distribute to healthcare professions who might treat patients with vomiting and diarrhea.

Healthcare providers:

- Ask patients with vomiting and/or diarrhea about any farm animal exposure.
- Obtain a stool sample and test for bacterial and parasitic pathogens, including *Cryptosporidium*.
- Do not treat patients with bloody diarrhea with antibiotics until STEC (Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*) have been ruled out.
- Report cases of diarrheal illness who have visited Nelson's Farm in Litchfield to MDH at 1-877-676-5414 (toll-free) or 651-201-5414.

The Minnesota Department of Health is investigating an outbreak of diarrheal illness associated with visiting the Nelson Farm in Litchfield, MN (Meeker County). Outbreaks associated with farm animal contact may include multiple pathogens including *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC), and *Cryptosporidium*. Over 10 cases of diarrheal illness from 5 different schools have been reported, including three cases of laboratory-confirmed *Cryptosporidium* infection. All cases reported visiting the Nelson Farm as part of school sponsored trips starting on May 9. However, numerous school groups have visited the farm through May 25, so there could be many more individuals who are currently ill or incubating illness.

Symptoms and incubation periods vary between pathogens, but most patients present with diarrhea and abdominal pain that last longer than 3 days. Patients with *Salmonella* infection generally present with diarrhea and fever that occur 12 to 72 hours after exposure but can begin up to a week after exposure. Patients with *Campylobacter* infections generally present with diarrhea and fever 2 to 5 days following exposure. Patients with STEC infections generally present with severe bloody diarrhea or non-bloody diarrhea and abdominal pain, but little to no fever 1 to 8 days (usually 2 to 5 days) following exposure. Patients with *Cryptosporidium* infections present with watery diarrhea, vomiting, stomach cramps 2 to 14 days following exposure and symptoms may be intermittent.

Providers should obtain stool samples from patients with vomiting and diarrhea and test for bacterial and parasitic pathogens with a specific request for *Cryptosporidium*. Patients infected with *E. coli* O157:H7 are at increased risk for developing hemolytic uremic syndrome following antibiotic exposure. Do not prescribe antibiotics to patients with bloody diarrhea until STEC have been ruled out.

More information on intestinal illness acquired from animals can be found here:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/animal/index.html>

A copy of this HAN is available in PDF and Word format at www.health.state.mn.us/han/.

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